



## The Wyoming Self-Sufficiency Standard: What it is and Why it matters

### What is it?

The Wyoming Self-Sufficiency Standard calculates how much money working adults need to meet their basic needs without subsidies of any kind. It accounts for varying costs of living and working by family size and composition and by where these families reside in Wyoming. By using the information in the Standard, we can learn more about what wages are adequate to pay for basic living costs such as housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and taxes.

### Why Does it Matter?

From rising healthcare costs to growing numbers of single-parent heads of households and the cost of childcare, many Wyoming families are struggling to make it. When they don't, we pay high costs at every turn. We pay more work supports, like food stamps, childcare vouchers, and Medicaid. We create the need for more social services, and more infrastructure, more police and law enforcement.

By creating paths to self-sufficiency, we can divert monies currently used as 'band-aids' to programs that provide training, encourage the right kind of job creation, and secure the health of Wyoming communities.

### What are Self-Sufficient wages in Wyoming?

Below is a chart that shows wages in six of Wyoming's counties, based on three different family types.

County	Hourly wage needed for single working adult	Hourly wage needed for single parent of a infant and preschooler	Hourly wages needed for two adults with a preschooler and a school-age child
Carbon	\$5.86	\$9.13	\$7.85 per adult
Laramie	\$6.47	\$13.46	\$7.86 per adult
Natrona	\$6.04	\$13.13	\$8.40 per adult
Niobrara	\$5.92	\$12.69	\$7.95 per adult
Sheridan	\$6.40	\$14.05	\$8.74 per adult
Teton	\$8.93	\$21.62	\$12.32 per adult

### Aren't the Self-Sufficiency Wages "too high"?

No. Because the Self-Sufficiency Standard is calculated using the real costs of goods and services purchased in the regular marketplace, it reflects the real expenses consumers face. The Standard is a no-frills budget that does not allow for entertainment, fast food, savings, credit card debt or emergency expenses such as car repairs. Plus, it is important to remember that any time a family does not make enough to cover these basic costs, the community or state must find ways to pay for them.

### **Do You Expect Employers to Pay Workers These Wages?**

Not entirely. Employers are only one of several stakeholders that have a role in ensuring that families have incomes sufficient to cover their costs. The government has a role in ensuring that job training and education, as well as work supports like child care, are affordable and accessible to families. Individuals are responsible for taking advantage of opportunities to invest in themselves and their potential. And finally, employers need to compare the cost of providing decent wages and benefits with the cost of not providing those and risking higher turnover costs, training costs, and potential for lost customers, opportunity and market share.

### **How Can the Wyoming Standard Be Used?**

We can use the Standard to:

- **Educate people about the real costs of living in Wyoming**, as well as the real costs to families and communities when wages are insufficient.
- **Develop our high-wage jobs sector** through focusing on training programs in high-wage areas, recruiting high-wage businesses into our state, and recognizing current Wyoming businesses that are paving the way with the wages, benefits, and “family-friendly” policies they offer.
- **Build our educational capacity** through career development and increasing access to educational opportunities.
- **Value public help** by investing in affordable housing, child care, and health care, and encouraging public supports such as food stamps to be used as a step toward self-sufficiency, not a permanent solution.

### **Who Conducted the Wyoming Self-Sufficiency Standard?**

The effort was led by First Lady Nancy Freudenthal and 20 other Wyoming professionals in areas of social services, government, and business. The group worked with the University of Washington and an organization called Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW). The University of Washington and WOW have successfully conducted FESS projects in 36 states, including Wyoming.

**The Wyoming Standard is available at  
<http://wyoming.gov/governor/policies/people.asp>**

**For more information, contact the Governor’s Planning Office at (307) 777-8514.**

